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Letter from Ceylon Kingston to his mother, dated January 31, 1919

Ceylon S. Kingston

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Thibancourt, Vases, Jan. 31, 1919

My dear Mother:

I have at last received your second letter. It came Wednesday Jan. 29th and I was very glad to know that you were all well. Tell Betty that here writing is not as good this time as it was in the letter she wrote me in November. Next time she must take more care. Tell John that I have not seen a German helmet since I have been in France. The helmets with spikes on the top were of cloth and were worn at the beginning of the war. Then they changed to a round cloth cap and a steel hat of a rather flat shape. But if I get track of one I will try to get it to take home.

In March I have the right to ten days leave and I want to go to Verdun and Rhinns and other points where the heavy fighting occurred.

I expect to go to Paris next month to see if they will not let me return in the spring.

We had a little snow Sunday — about three inches which is still on the ground. The 250 soldiers here — all boys 20 years old — have had a lot of snow ball battles since the snow came.

Yesterday Lieutenant Guillemart told me that there were five wild boars that had been killed by the hunters of the region in a bug drive at the Puits de Haye farm about 6 or 7 kilometers west of here. So in the afternoon I walked to the place. This is an isolated farmhouse quite unlike most of the French farmhouses which are in the villages. It is in rather a lonesome place with the forest on the sides. But when I got there the hunters had taken the carcasses of the wild boars away. The farmer's wife showed me the head of one and I examined the big tusks which are so dangerous. One may shoot wild boars at anytime of the year as they destroy the crops. When I told Lieutenant Guillemart that I should think they would be soon exterminated he said that it was not easy to find them unless there was snow on the ground. They are not afraid of dogs. They are swift and cunning. And they increase in numbers rapidly. I ate some wild boar at Martigny and it was delicious.

I am glad to know that the influenza is dying out in Canton. I got some letters lately from Cheney. They seem to have had it very bad in Washington. More than 400 deaths occurred in Spokane alone. None of my friends in Washington died so far as I have been informed.

This fall here in this cantonment there were about 15 deaths among perhaps 4000 young soldiers scattered among

the villages of this region. The death rate was less than in our own army camps where the soldiers were crowded into immense camps.

Mr. Oman paid some money into my account at the Chewelah bank and I am enclosing a check for \$1000 to Lloyd. If he wants to sell me his Liberty Bond of \$1000 that I gave him, for the face value and interest to date I will buy it back. I do not know the amount of accumulated interest but whatever it is I will give him when I return.

He can perhaps turn the money in on his own indebtedness. If he does not care to sell the bond you can destroy the check and either way will suit me.

I find that the allowance which the Y.M.C.A. makes me is more than enough for my expenses. It differs so much in different places. As a general thing work with the American forces entails more expense than with the French.

I think I did well to take the French side of the service. About one in 20 did so. It has taught me a great deal of the language that I could not get so well in any other way. There are some drawbacks but that is inevitable in any service.

Nothing much has occurred since I last wrote. We expect the Commandedant back today or tomorrow and I will be glad to see him again.

So much for this week.

Affectionately,

Ceylon